UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/ICEF/1996/3
3 November 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND
Executive Board
First regular session 1996
22-26 January 1996
Item 10 of the provisional agenda*

FOR ACTION

FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

SUMMARY

As a follow-up to its commitment made at the Fourth World Conference on Women, UNICEF follow-up action in the implementation of the Platform for Action (PFA) will focus on three priority areas: (a) girls' education; (b) adolescent girls' and women's health; and (c) children's rights and women's rights. Other actions include initiatives to help end harmful traditional practices, attention to the gender dimension of emergency programmes and the empowerment of women.

UNICEF will support actions taken by Governments and non-governmental organizations and collaborate with other agencies of the United Nations system and intergovernmental bodies at international, regional and national levels, especially in the implementation of "the Girl Child" section of the PFA focusing on the identified priority areas. It will further support the development of networks on these priorities.

A draft recommendation on UNICEF follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women for Executive Board approval is contained in paragraph 28.

* E/ICEF/1996/2.

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INTRODUCTION

1. The 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women and the Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) Forum held at Beijing, China, were historic milestones for women's and girls' advancement. The Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action (PFA) reaffirmed that women's rights were human rights; that peace is essential to the advancement of women; that the life cycle perspective should be adopted in eliminating gender-based inequalities to development; and that girls should be accorded equal opportunity in their own right and as tomorrow's women.

2. In preparing for the Conference, and at the Conference, the major UNICEF concerns were: establishing the priority to the girl child in achieving the goals for children; adopting a life cycle perspective to promote gender equality; the complementarity of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; and the empowerment and equal participation of women and girls in families, communities and nations. To this end, UNICEF collaborated with the Conference Secretariat, the NGO Forum, NGOs and other United Nations agencies at national, regional and global levels.

3. UNICEF organized a number of events at the NGO Forum and at the Conference, including the "Day of Girls" on 6 September. Information materials and a special exhibition on girls were prepared for the Conference. Girls and young women were active participants in many of the events. UNICEF advocacy led to the inclusion of its priority themes in the PFA, in particular, the section on "the Girl Child" which emphasized the link between the situation of girls and that of women in achieving equality, development and peace for women.

I. UNICEF PROGRAMME PRIORITIES AND THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

4. Three key areas have been identified as priority areas of action by UNICEF in the implementation of the PFA. These are: (a) girls' education; (b) adolescent girls' and women's health; and (c) children's rights and women's rights.

5. UNICEF will adopt an strategy to facilitate implementation of the identified priority areas. Specific actions envisaged will include (a) linking advocacy for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women with national programmes of action (NPAs) for children and implementation of the PFA; (b) ensuring gender-responsiveness of UNICEF country programmes, using the life cycle approach and the gender equality and empowerment framework, beginning with the situation analysis and developing a system for monitoring (with the development of indicators and the disaggregation of information by gender and age), evaluation and accountability; (c) supporting the participation of NGOs, women's groups and youth groups in the implementation and monitoring of the PFA as partners for change, ensuring that the voices of girls and young women are heard. Actions necessary within UNICEF to enhance the institutional capacity to effectively achieve its commitments include the following: (a) building the capacity of UNICEF staff and counterparts in gender analysis and gender-responsive programming with training as an entry point; (b) reviewing the

organizational structure and allocation of resources at all levels - headquarters, region and country - to reflect effective implementation of the PFA; (c) striving to create a work environment that is free from gender role discrimination; (d) developing a system of accountability which facilitates country-level initiatives to eliminate gender discrimination based on needs and country-specificities and in line with the policy and guidelines approved by the Executive Board (see E/ICEF/1994/L.5 and Add.1 and E/ICEF/1994/13/Rev.1, decision 1994/A/4).

A. Girls' education

6. It is widely recognized that girls' education is the single most important investment for creating opportunities for girls for their own empowerment, improving the quality of life for their future families and laying the foundation for gender equality and sustainable human development. UNICEF will intensify its efforts in furthering the goals of the World Summit for Children and the PFA on basic education and to take an active role in implementing key PFA areas of action on eliminating gender discrimination in basic education. It will seek to ensure gender equality in the achievement of the goals of universal access to basic education and completion by at least 80 per cent of primary school-age children by the year 2000.

7. The UNICEF strategy will address actions at global and country levels. At the global level, it will monitor, advocate for and support - through country programmes and partnerships - quality primary education (with early childhood and adult education as supporting strategies) for all girls. At the country level, an intensified country-specific approach will be used in approximately 30 enrolment, completion and achievement) or specific gender problems.

8. The UNICEF approach will focus on (a) enhancing the quality and relevance of education offered to children within a diversified education system; and (b) targeting aspects of life beyond the conventional education sector that are crucial to ensuring a girl's right to basic education.

9. Three major types of obstacles within the education system need to be overcome in order for girls to succeed in education: (a) the financial burden, which includes opportunity costs and girls' work and labour, as well as issues around the cost and financing of primary education; (b) weak parental partnerships/educational demand, which calls for parents and other key actors to be active participants in building a consensus for girls' education and ensuring that this consensus is put into action; and (c) poor learning environment, which requires that actions for promoting a positive, nurturing, physically and psychologically safe learning environment be intensified.

10. Many of the factors inhibiting girls' education are rooted well beyond the education sector. UNICEF also will work towards (a) the development of an integrated information, communications, advocacy and social mobilization strategy in support of basic education with girls' primary education as a major thrust; (b) linking the promotion of girls' education with efforts to eliminate poverty; and (c) paying specific attention to cross-sectoral constraints to girls' education such as water supply and sanitation facilities in schools and health and nutrition of young girls.

B. Adolescent girls' and women's health

11. The health of women and girls is becoming an increasingly important programming area for UNICEF. Adolescent girls require knowledge, skills, access to services and a supportive environment to ensure a healthy transition from childhood to adulthood. It is during adolescence that girls develop life-long health attitudes and behaviour which will influence their own health as youth and adults, the health of their families and their capacity to be caring and supportive parents.

12. As outlined in the report on "UNICEF follow-up to the International Conference on Population and Development" (ICPD) (E/ICEF/1995/12/Rev.1), UNICEF efforts in the area of adolescent health seek to build stronger dialogue and partnerships among young people, parents, educators, health providers and community leaders on health. UNICEF will strengthen its programming and advocacy for adolescent girls' health and nutrition through partnerships in the following areas: (a) in schools, through the provision of health and nutrition services and relevant life skills; (b) in services, through improving the availability and quality of reproductive health services and strengthening linkages between youth and women's NGOs and the health sector; (c) in mass communication, through the integration of health into the entertainment and news media; and (d) in community-based organizations, through peer education and referral. Particular areas of concern which require further programme development are strengthening the role of parents and the family in adolescents' reproductive health and the shared responsibility of boys and young men in sexual and reproductive health decision-making.

13. The report on the "Health strategy for UNICEF" (E/ICEF/1995/11/Rev.1) recommends the promotion of an integrated approach to reproductive health services for women, including reproductive health education, family planning, prenatal and post-natal services, delivery care, prevention and management of sexually transmitted diseases/AIDS and child health. UNICEF will promote actions for "women's groups for women's health" to encourage the active involvement of women in the health system at the community level.

C. Children's rights and women's rights

14. In line with the reaffirmation in the PFA of the intimate connection between human rights and the rights of women and girls, UNICEF will continue to call for universal ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, a mid-decade goal that has been nearly achieved, and for universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women by the year 2000. In the "post-ratification era", UNICEF will focus efforts primarily on supporting implementation of those treaties at the national level. UNICEF will focus special actions on the following three areas: (a) legal literacy; (b) promoting mutually supportive linkages between both Conventions; and (c) a gender-sensitive "rights" approach to programming.

15. In promoting legal literacy, particularly on women's and children's rights, popular versions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Discrimination Against Women will

be developed and disseminated. Selected topics, such as the rights to health by adolescents, violence in families and communities, and access to information, can be developed further for use in specific programmes. The linkages between both Conventions will be strengthened by promoting linkages and networking between bodies/organizations promoting child rights with those promoting women's rights. At the international level, UNICEF will endeavour to facilitate meetings between the Committees of both Conventions to share experiences and develop mechanisms for adoption of mutually supportive strategies which will strengthen both. At the country level, UNICEF will facilitate collaboration among bodies, agencies and NGOs - groups working for women's rights and children's rights within the context of implementation of NPAs and national-level PFAs.

16. Women's rights will be an integral part of the UNICEF country programming process. The use of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women as a framework requires design and implementation of intersectoral programmes that address the evolving capacities of children, in particular girls, in the areas of nutrition, education, reproductive health and life skills for employment and empowerment, water supply and environmental sanitation, thus maintaining their interest as children, adolescents and tomorrow's adults. The complementarity of both Conventions also will serve as the basis for education programmes on human rights, peace-building and conflict resolution.

D. Other actions

17. UNICEF will collaborate actively with other United Nations agencies, particularly the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), as well as with other organizations at international, regional and country levels, in promoting the health, education and well-being of children and women. UNICEF will cooperate with others on measures to end harmful and negative practices which are violations of the human rights of girls and detrimental to their survival and development. Specifically, it will develop strategies and action plans to intensify its efforts against female genital mutilation, female infanticide, prenatal sex selection and child marriage. Emphasis also will be placed on the eradication of gender-based abuse, neglect and violence, especially domestic violence.

18. In UNICEF emergency programmes, special steps will be taken to (a) promote the equal participation of women in emergency assistance programmes; (b) increase women's participation in conflict resolution and peace-building; (c) promote non-violent forms of conflict resolution and the protection of human rights through gender-sensitive training for all relevant personnel as well as through supportive measures to protect women and girls from abuse; (d) meet gender-specific needs of adolescent girls and women, such as reproductive health care; and (e) promote gender equality and foster a culture of peace through peace education programmes.

19. Specific strategies to operationalize the above issues will be developed. The guidelines for emergency assessment will be revised to include data on the specific impact of conflict and crisis on women and the identification of women's coping and survival skills; inclusion of women in planning and

assessment teams; the provision of more accurate targeting and distribution methodologies to ensure that supplies reach families and particularly female-headed households; and the development of specific strategies to address issues of sexual violence and having a programme for the protection and special needs of unaccompanied children, child prisoners and combatants, with a special focus on the needs of girls in these situation. A special focus will be to develop networks with research institutions and centres of excellence working on gender issues, to identify women's organizations and experts at the country level and to develop modalities for training and capacity-building for women in crisis. Special health kits for women developed in 1995 will be field tested and included as part of the health strategy in emergencies.

20. UNICEF will contribute to the social, political and economic empowerment of women, which is a strategic objective of the PFA. UNICEF actions will include (a) promotion of women's participation as decision makers at all levels in UNICEF-supported programmes and projects; (b) acceleration of capacity-building through gender training, based on the empowerment conceptual framework and life cycle approach, for UNICEF staff as well as partners in Governments and NGOs; (c) promotion of leadership training for women and girls; and (d) promotion of a redefinition in the sharing of responsibilities between women, men, boys and girls in the family and in society. UNICEF-supported initiatives on the empowerment of women, which often are small scale and do not always include adolescent girls, need to be expanded and involve youth and men in changing gender roles and ushering in an era of gender equality.

II. UNICEF COMMITMENTS AND COLLABORATIONS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION

21. UNICEF is committed to supporting actions taken by Governments, other agencies and NGOs in the implementation of the section on the "the Girl Child" in the PFA. In its own programmes, UNICEF will increase its resources and strengthen its advocacy and programme delivery structures to facilitate effective implementation of its commitments and actions described above. In the area of education, UNICEF will seek to double its budget for education by the year 2000, ensuring a special focus on girls' education.

22. The PFA calls for its implementation "through the work of all the bodies and organizations of the United Nations system during the period 1995-2000, specifically and as an integral part of wider programming". It further states that the clear delineation of responsibility and accountability should be reflected in the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001. UNICEF will be an active participant in the preparation of the system-wide medium-term plan and coordination of the implementation of areas of concerns where it is identified as an active partner. In the critical area of action on "the Girl Child", UNICEF will seek to collaborate and coordinate with WHO, UNFPA, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, UNESCO and the World Bank.

23. As member of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP)/Women in Development Sub-group, UNICEF will collaborate in joint activities to promote implementation of the PFA. One area tentatively identified for collaborative

action is the preparation of a simplified popular version of the PFA for wide dissemination and use by the partner agencies. In the area of gender statistics, UNICEF will continue to collaborate in the preparation of updates of "The World's Women" statistical publication. At the country level, JCGP/Women in Development Sub-group or multi-donor initiatives, as is usually the case in many countries, are expected to facilitate the setting up and institutionalization of follow-up mechanisms.

24. UNICEF will continue to support the programme development process of working through technical support groups in selected countries on adolescent girls' health. Through this process, UNICEF and key technical partners will develop and strengthen programming approaches. At the regional level, support will continue to the Adolescent Girl Communication Initiative which uses entertainment media to address the broad range of problems facing adolescent girls. Cooperation with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS will include HIV/AIDS prevention among adolescent girls as one of the key areas to which UNICEF will contribute.

25. UNICEF will continue its cooperation with the Centre for Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights as well as its support to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It will enlist the support of new partners such as human rights organizations with the mandate to promote and protect the human rights of women and children.

26. UNICEF will ensure that girls' special needs will be reflected in relevant upcoming international conferences, such as the Habitat II Conference in June 1996 and the World Conference on Commercial Exploitation of Children in August 1996. UNICEF also will be sensitive to the gender-specific issues that should be addressed in the special United Nations Study on Armed Conflict that is presently being undertaken.

27. UNICEF will provide technical support to and collaborate with global and regional groups of Governments, international organizations and NGOs promoting equal opportunities for girls and women. Finally, UNICEF will support the development of networks among United Nations agencies, NGOs and other relevant actors to monitor implementation of the PFA as part of its mandate for the well-being of children and women.

III. DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

28. The Executive Director recommends that the Executive Board adopt the following draft recommendation on UNICEF follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women:

The Executive Board,

Reaffirming that UNICEF follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women should be consistent with policies in, inter alia, gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls (E/ICEF/1994/L.5 and Add.1), policy review papers on basic education (E/ICEF/1995/16) and the health strategy for UNICEF (E/ICEF/1995/11/Rev.1), and UNICEF follow-up to ICPD (E/ICEF/1995/12/Rev.1),

1. **Endorses** the framework for follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women as presented in the document E/ICEF/1996/3, emphasizing priorities in advocacy and programming to girls' education, adolescent girls' and women's health, and children's and women's rights;

2. **Encourages** UNICEF to strengthen its partnerships, coordination and collaboration with all agencies of the United Nations system, including UNESCO, UNFPA, WHO, the World Bank and other United Nations agencies and NGOs which are actively involved in the implementation of the Platform for Action of the Conference.